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SUBJECT: CUKAROVA AG RESEARCHERS BRIEF ON SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA PROJECT

(U) This cable was drafted by AmConsul Adana.

1. (SBU) On July 26, PO and DPO attended an informal Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) background presentation by several of the former GAP chief agricultural researchers now residing as retired faculty at Cukurova university. The briefing was based on approximately 18 month-old data, but was still informative. The professors lamented the rise of salinity in the Adana area and noted that the process is beginning in Harran now due to heavy surface irrigation and almost exclusive cotton cultivation, a percentage that recommend be no greater than about 35% of the crop mix. While they thought that Harran farmers would slowly adapt to the merits of crop rotation and mixed seasonal planting, including fruit trees and cash crops like almonds, they said it took 25 years for Adana's Cukurova farmers to learn and the Harran plain area farmers did not have that long to adapt given terrain and salinity tendencies there in the face of sustained surface and sprinkler irrigation. They also lamented the limited (one-ninth finished, they claimed) development of the full GAP potential and, particularly, the lack of marketing of its goods to Middle Eastern markets.

2. (SBU) One professor also remarked that Italian and Spanish firms are doing well in fruit cultivation joint ventures, mainly apples, in Nigde and northern Adana provinces, in addition to longer standing efforts in and around Antalya. They said that Italian firms are also doing well with specialty seasonal vegetables in Hatay.

3. (SBU) Finally, in a discussion about the benefits of trickle irrigation, several professors said that they saw little evidence of sustained or substantial Israeli buying or investment in the Harran region, despite reports to the contrary. They said that Israeli firms regularly market irrigation, particularly drip or trickle type, technology in Harran, but there was no "run on land near Sanliurfa by Israeli investors that they had noticed." This was seconded by the honorary German consul, who also unexpectedly attended. They also said that mechanical cotton harvesting technology has never taken off down here, but could do so in Adana as it seems to be doing in Ege area, as boosted by a new Israeli-Uzbek joint venture (NFI) selling its machinery at low prices with good financing terms. They hypothesized that labor remains too cheap in the Harran area to see mechanical cotton harvesting successful.

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